
NEWS From:

Congressman Mike Honda

FIFTEENTH DISTRICT - CALIFORNIA

www.house.gov/honda

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Contact: Ernest Baynard
(202) 225-2631



Honda, Rohrabacher Block '02 Funding for Use Against U.S. POWs

Spending Bill Language Prevents Use of Federal Funds Against POWs in Court Case

Washington, DC— After tirelessly lobbying Members of Congress last night during the passage of next year's spending bill for the Commerce, State and Justice Departments, California Representatives Mike Honda (D-San Jose) and Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA) scored a major victory for U.S. World War II POWs who have so far been blocked by the U.S. State Department from suing Japanese corporations who forced them to perform slave labor during their captivity. The duo successfully offered an amendment to the appropriations bill prohibiting the Justice and State Departments from using any 2002 funding against U.S. World War II POWs in court. The amendment was overwhelmingly adopted 395-33.

"This House has sent a powerful message to the Bush Administration and the State Department that our POWs—who survived unimaginable horrors during World War II, should not be forced to survive a judicial system that is slanted against them to achieve the justice they deserve," said Honda.

"It is shocking that the U.S. government continues to oppose to our veterans' claims against these Japanese companies, rather than helping them resolve this matter— we should not allow our own government to use the resources we appropriate to oppose our former POWs in court."

"The U.S. Congress just sent the State Department and these Japanese multinationals who enslaved our American heroes a message -- our veterans deserve their day in court," said Rohrabacher.

The amendment supports H.R. 1198, *"The Justice for United States Prisoners of War Act"* sponsored by Rohrabacher and Honda, which would allow former American POWs from World War II to sue the Japanese companies that enslaved them. The bill interprets section 14(b) of the Treaty of Peace with Japan as not constituting a waiver by the United States to allow lawsuits by its POWs against Japan and its corporations—a position held by the U.S. State Department. The bill would also instruct the courts to apply the statute of limitations of the state where any suit is brought to preserve claims that are currently being brought by American POWs against Japanese corporations in state and federal courts. The bill also provides that if Japan enters into peace settlement terms with another country more beneficial to that country than to the United States, those additional benefits will also be extended to the United States.

"As someone who spent his first few years of life in an internment camp in Amache, Colorado for Japanese Americans during World War II, I learned firsthand about injustice—and about the redemption that redress and reconciliation can bring," continued Honda. **"As we embark upon a new century, we must come to grips with the events of the past in order to rededicate ourselves to the pursuit of justice and reconciliation for all people— affording our POWs their day in court is a big step in that direction."**